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Students' Problems	101
The Lunatic Fringe	105
Revaluations VII	107
The Junior Borrower	109
Literature, Graduates and the Library Profession	111
National Service and Army Libraries	113
A.A.L. Correspondence Courses	116

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THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

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(Section of the Library Association)

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STUDENTS' PROBLEMS

By O. S. TOMLINSON.

Students of Registration A(iii)—Practical Classification and Cataloguing—will now be able to breathe freely again. The Library Association has decided that candidates will be expected "to classify as specifically as the schedules and tables of the scheme used will permit." The cloud of doubt about this has been hanging over all since the Phillips—Pugsley correspondence appeared in the "Assistant Librarian" last year. Maybe the cloud of doubt will be replaced by the dust of battle—for one person at least will be still in the fight—but for students the issue is now clear. They must follow the syllabus.

"Examinations are unfair!" It is not only from those who fail that we hear this opinion. Many people allege that the written test, the examination room atmosphere, the selection of questions and the advantage of a good memory all weigh in the scales. This is a criticism of all examinations, not just those of the Library Association—and it has some merit, although compensations can be added by examiners, all of whom know these arguments and have experienced the ordeal themselves. These general considerations are not my immediate concern—discussion of them could fill several numbers of the *Assistant Librarian*—but I have often been asked questions by students and others about the actual administration of the examinations of the L.A., and these questions have often contained either veiled hints or open accusations that the examination machinery and the examiners are in opposition to the candidates and that the whole show is at worst a "catch," or at best a bit of luck. These ideas are inflated by the gross lack of knowledge about the examination set-up. There is nothing secret about it—people just don't trouble, don't know how or haven't the time to find out, and of course there is always that small core who prefer to base their opinions on rumours, suspicions and old-wives' tales. So I put a few questions to Mr. B. I. Palmer, the Education Officer of the Library Association, and he gave me frank and informative replies, which are reproduced here. The interview had the full approval and blessing of the Chairman of the L.A. Education Subcommittee (Mr. W. B. Paton) and to both these gentlemen I am much obliged. No doubt there are other questions that I might have asked, but I think that we covered most of the points that are frequently raised.

* * *

Q. Many students—and others—have only a very hazy notion about the administration and organisation of Library Association examinations, so I am very pleased that you have given me this opportunity to ask you

a few questions that should help to clear the air a little for everyone.

Perhaps a good starting point would be to explain which Committee of the Association Council is responsible for examinations?

A. The whole conduct of the Examinations, and the maintenance of the Register of Chartered Librarians is delegated to the Register and Examinations Executive Committee. This consists of all the Fellows on the Council.

* * *

Q. What are the Education Sub-Committee and the Assessors Committee and how do they differ from each other in their relation to education and examinations?

A. As the Register and Examinations Executive Committee is so big, it has its detailed work done for it by the Education and Assessors Sub-Committees. These are both recommending committees, whose minutes are submitted to and approved by the Register and Examinations Executive Committee. The Education Sub-Committee is concerned with the review of the syllabus, the administrative side of the examinations, the provision of training facilities, the approval of library service, and so on. The Assessors Sub-Committee deals with the internal aspects of the examinations: relations with examiners, vetting of draft examination papers, scrutiny of results, sampling of scripts, reception of examiners' reports, and publication of results.

* * *

Q. Who are the examiners and how are they chosen?

A. The examiners are Fellows, who have applied to be engaged as examiners and who have been appointed after the Assessors have satisfied themselves that they are suitable. An examiner is expected to have shown a special interest in the subject for which he is chosen.

* * *

Q. Why doesn't the L.A. publish the names of the examiners?

A. By decision of the Council the names of the Board of Examiners are published, but no examiner is associated with any subject.

* * *

Q. How is the syllabus drawn up—and kept up to date in the light of changing circumstances?

A. The present syllabus is a revised version of that introduced after the War. It was prepared in the Winter of 1947-8 by an *ad hoc* Syllabus Sub-Committee consisting of examiners, heads of schools, and representatives of all sections and of Aslib. The Assessors keep the syllabus under continuous review, in the light of their scrutiny of sample examination scripts; but they also have remits from the Education Sub-Committee following recommendations from the Moderating Committees, or other interested parties. The Education Sub-Committee may recommend syllabus revision to the Register and Examinations Executive Committee.

* * *

Q. What are Moderating Committees—whom do they comprise—what is their job?

A. The Moderating Committees began as an instrument for the exchange of views between teachers and examiners, but they have been found useful bodies to which to refer questions about specific parts of the syllabus. They consist of the senior examiners and subject Assessors of a Group or Part of the syllabus, of representatives of full-time, part-time and correspondence teachers, and of the Chairman of Assessors. Such of their conclusions as are helpful have been circulated to full-time

and part-time schools, and to the A.A.L. Correspondence Courses Secretary. Others of their recommendations have gone to the Assessors and Education Sub-Committees, and have resulted in revisions of the syllabus. These Moderating Committees are doing very valuable work.

* * *

Q. I expect that a fairly big Education Department exists to cope with all the examination details. Perhaps you could tell us something about it?

A. The Education Department would require an article to itself. The staff is quite small, however, and has not grown since 1947, though examination entries have doubled, and all other work considerably increased. Carefully designed forms, and self-guiding and checking routines enable the very considerable volume of work to be carried through by a secretary and two clerks in addition to the officer.

* * *

Q. What sort of a time-table has to be followed for the running of the examinations? Why does it take so long for results to be published?

A. This is a typical examination time-table taken from a few years back:—

July 1st.	Examination held.
July 2nd—4th.	Scripts received at Chaucer House.
July 3rd—5th.	Scripts reach examiners.
Aug. 3rd.	Scripts, marks and reports returned by examiners: borderlines and samples extracted and sent to subject assessors.
Aug. 15th.	Samples, etc. returned. From 3rd—17th Aug. administrative work on results is in progress at at Chaucer House.
Aug. 16th.	Assessors Sub-Committee meeting.
Aug. 17th.	Completion of pass lists.
Aug. 18th.	Posting of result cards.

It can be seen that for almost the whole of the time between the examinations and the results, the scripts are in the hands of examiners and assessors.

I do not think that seven weeks is a long time for the completion of results. Pass lists are published in the next succeeding issue of the Library Association Record.

* * *

Q. Who sets the questions? Is there any machinery for ensuring that they are fair and to the syllabus?

A. Draft question papers are produced by the Senior Examiners. These are reviewed by Subject Assessors appointed for each subject. The drafts, with the Subject Assessors' comments, are then considered by the Assessors Sub-Committee, and the Senior Examiners are asked to make any necessary changes.

* * *

Q. Now about the actual examinations. Do you think there are enough centres? And what about complaints regarding centres—that some are noisy, others cramped, others with inadequate canteen facilities, etc.?

A. The number of centres is reasonably related to library "populations." If any centre appears to be getting overcrowded, a new centre is opened in the same part of the country, while any new demand is

always considered. Complaints are investigated and where they are justified, an attempt is made to remedy them. Usually they arise from shortage of suitable accommodation due to war damage. Canteen facilities cannot reasonably be expected, and a lunchtime of 1½ hours is provided to enable the use of normal public eating facilities.

* * *

Q. How are the examination scripts marked? Does one examiner mark all in one group, or is the job shared between a team?

A. This depends upon the number of candidates. The more scripts, the more examiners. A balance has to be held between overworking a few examiners and maintaining equal standards as between a number.

* * *

Q. How is consistency between examiners ensured? Is consideration given to borderline failures, to candidates who don't complete the last question and other difficult cases? And does anyone check the examiners' markings?

A. To ensure consistency, the Senior Examiner in each team instructs his assistants how to mark. He reviews their border-line scripts, and communicates his results to Chaucer House as firm recommendations. Here borderlines are extracted, together with sample fails and passes, for the Subject Assessor to review. He reports on them to the Assessors Sub-Committee, who themselves see samples of scripts, and may call for any scripts at their special meetings held twice a year to assess results.

* * *

Q. What marks are required for pass, merit and honours?

A. These are stated on the result cards: $60/120 = \text{Pass}$, $85/120 = \text{Merit}$, $100/120 = \text{Hons}$.

* * *

Q. Is there any limitation to the number of candidates that the examiners are allowed to pass?

A. Absolutely none. If 100 good candidates should appear, 100 would pass.

* * *

Q. Sometimes misprints and ambiguities are revealed in an exam. paper. What allowances are made to candidates for such occurrences?

A. On the rare occasions when this happens, every possible allowance is made.

* * *

Q. In certain papers, candidates must take several parts—for example in the Entrance Examination, or Registration Group A. Must they pass in each group—or will a high mark in one part offset low ones in others?

A. Candidates are expected to pass in each part of a Group of the Registration Examination, except that in Group A a candidate who passes in the practical paper and one other, fails marginally in the third, but gains an aggregate of 180 marks is given a pass by compensation. In the Entrance Examination a pass is given on aggregate marks notwithstanding a border-line failure in an individual paper.

* * *

Q. Two final questions. The first—has a candidate any redress if he feels he has been unfairly treated or that the questions were not within the syllabus? Can he "get at" the Education Committee?

A. He may write to the Chairman of Assessors, but in view of the great care taken with papers and results, he would need to have a very

strong conviction to justify such a step. Nevertheless, his letter would not be ignored.

* * *

Q. And lastly—have you a final tip for candidates?

A. Yes. Be properly prepared for the examination, and answer the questions set, not those you wish had been set.

THE LUNATIC FRINGE

H. D. WESTACOTT, *Croydon P.L.*

IN THIS brief article I am attempting to diagnose the mental climate of the younger members of our profession, to point out their deficiencies from the point of view of the general public, and to suggest improvements. Now I realise that to generalise upon a group as large as this is beset with dangers, and to minimise them I want to make it clear that these thoughts are directed at the younger generation of librarians in the London area, and in particular the brighter products of the library schools. Many will disagree with me, but we are all conscious that there is such a thing as a library mentality which we must do our best to combat.

A few weeks ago I entered the staff canteen with a colleague. As we sat down the occupants immediately left for another table, and my friend commented that librarians did not mix with the Town Hall staff. And how true this is of so many London Boroughs. The explanation is not far to find; the librarian works in a climate where he has to be mentally alert; he is constantly answering questions on every conceivable subject, and is continually handling objects which are the universal method of communicating ideas. As the risk of sounding priggish most local government officers are dead from the neck upwards; the main interests of the men are sport and sex, and of the women cinema and sex. I am frightened of these people and many of my colleagues harbour similar sentiments.

But we have to remember that we are just as terrifying to them. So many of us have our pet forms of obsession that often make us appear quite unbalanced. We all know the librarian whose life revolves round one subject—Shakespeare, spelling reform, local history, or crossword puzzles, etc. I know of one library where almost every member of the staff has quite violent feelings about religion, which manifests itself in the form of strange and unhealthy sectarianism, so that one has to be careful to remember to whom one is speaking and to be careful what one says.

Unfortunately the generation that received their education in the post-war library schools are developing along the same lines. This is particularly true of the better products, those to whom we must look for leadership in the years to come. Practically every library in the London area has on its staff at least one young man who is either superior and fastidious, or rough and unwashed, but in either case long-haired and bearded, who wears unusual clothes and cocks a supercilious eyebrow at the incoming masses of humanity, from behind a counter. He gravitates to libraries because he often has a genuine aesthetic inclination which he is unable to satisfy creatively, and is driven to become a mere hanger-on of the literary world on the lunatic fringe of librarianship. He is a socialist, reads the *New Statesman*, *Art News* and the *Studio*, and appears to the uninitiated remarkably well-informed on various aspects of abnormal psychology and all forms of avant-garde art. He reacts violently

against the conventional person and to protect himself from him, he develops a very definite personality which is amusing to his colleagues, but frightening to the public.

After a while he goes to library school, where he meets kindred spirits, and together they form a hot-house coterie of modern culture and blossom alarmingly, so that by the time he returns to his library he is even stranger than when he went.

I have deliberately depicted an advanced case, but many librarians will recognise at least some of the symptoms in many of their staff. Now consider the effect this has on the public. Learning, places of learning and books are awesome things to many people, and the new reader who has entered into the reverential hush of the library, tiptoed to the counter and been confronted with the gorgeous creature described above is understandably dismayed. However much we love to feel different, we must act and appear to our public as normal as possible. I am aware that it is difficult to prevent oneself building up a resistance to people. Indeed I will go further and say that it is necessary. We dare not present a sympathetic front to people lest we are seized upon by the lonely, the frustrated or in other ways distorted people who are only too ready to share the most embarrassing confidences with the kindly assistant. We must be businesslike and efficient.

What can we do about it? Little, I fear, as a profession, but a great deal as individuals. The standard of literary expression in the profession can and should be raised. The *Assistant Librarian* is an offender here—witness that inane and wholly unintelligible article by Mr. Holliday in the February issue. After all we live amongst books and we ought to profit by the experience. As individuals we nearly all suffer from some form of twentieth century hangover, and the sensitive person is usually the hardest hit. The bright young man can do a great deal to help himself. I often find that while he displays considerable knowledge of modern art forms he is often wholly ignorant of or gained most of his knowledge of the culture upon which our society is based from critical works, not always of the best kind. Not long ago I was at the sort of Bohemian party that some librarians indulge in, and was solemnly informed by an earnest young man that the whole of Michael Angelo's art could be explained by the fact that he was a masochist. Later in the discussion it became apparent not only that he had never seen any work by Michael Angelo (which in itself is not surprising), but he had never examined any reproduction of his work. Whether Michael Angelo was a masochist or not is quite irrelevant. He created several supreme works and represents certain ideals which are of fundamental importance to us to-day. I don't want to know of his aberrations, I want to try and understand his art.

So much of the intellectual frustration which is present in our profession can be avoided if each one of us tries to *understand* the values upon which our civilization is based. We are often told by peddlers of platitudes that public libraries are store houses of knowledge and the bastions of culture, and each of us knows that a part of our library must be set aside for the best from all ages that our civilization has produced. As each year passes more and more of our traditional values are threatened. I do not suggest that these values are unchangeable, but they are of permanent worth and should be eternally enshrined. To exploit we must understand, and if we understand we will become more normal and approachable.

Young man! Before Eliot, the Elizabethans; the Florentines before the Fauves, and Socrates before Sartre.

REVALUATIONS VII

by Thomas Clearwater

WAR LITERATURE.

LAST YEAR we read Lillian Ross's *Picture* (1953), a deftly surgical account of the making in Hollywood of the film of Stephen Crane's *Red badge of courage*. At the time we suppressed the librarian's quick shame at not having read a book which we should have read. But a few weeks ago a colleague re-opened the wound by thrusting into our hands a copy of the book and thereby setting us to think about war literature.

In a preface to Crane's little book which was first published in 1895, Joseph Conrad wrote in 1923: "This war book, so virile and full of gentle sympathy, in which not a single declamatory sentiment defaces the genuine verbal felicity welding analysis and description in a continuous fascination of individual style . . ." His words give some idea of the nature of the book. It is not only about a war, the American Civil War, but about war and the reaction of men to the violence and to themselves. It is this fusion of analysis and description, this power to describe both the battlefield and the battle as seen by the combatant which we find lacking in much war literature of to-day. It is, of course, possible to depict a battle in such kaleidoscopic subjective terms that the whole terrible activity becomes the less bloody and the more ridiculous. It is in this manner that Stendhal, in *Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) reduces Waterloo to very near the level of Fred Karno's army. That neither this diffuse satire nor the crisp poetry of the *Iliad* will serve as vehicle for the writing on the war our generation has known, we are certain. We are also certain that any approach to the literature of our war must take into account both the nature of that war and the way people feel about it now.

We have not the space for a long political and social analysis of the Second War and its aftermath and, to be honest, we do not think that we librarians are capable of producing a satisfactory synthesis which we can embody in this short essay. We shall, therefore, take the satisfactory short cut of a comparison of the literatures of the two wars. We should like further to qualify this somewhat empirical approach by excluding foreign literature such as Henri Barbusse's *Under fire* (1917), Arnold Zweig's trilogy of which *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* (1927) is possibly the best known, Konstantin Simonov's *Days and nights* (1945) and Robert Merle's *Week-end at Zuydcoote* (1950). Also we shall not concern ourselves with historical survey and grand strategy (Churchill, Wilmot), the explanations of Generals and others (Eisenhower, Montgomery, Clark) or the bland self-justifications of the enemy (Kesselring, Gruderian, Speidel).

Of the literature of the First War which survives to-day, the outstanding characteristic is the disillusion of the majority of the writers. In a sense, this may have stemmed from the isolation of the soldier in the trenches from the civilian at home; the civilian was not then a participant in the same manner or degree as in the Second War. The distrust of politicians and profiteers was greater, the sense of futility deeper—a reaction best seen in the war poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, poetry written during the war. But it was the decade following the Armistice during which appeared the books showing the effect of shock on the writer. Examples are many, but we select for your attention Richard Aldington's *Death of a hero* (1929), *Three soldiers* (1921) by John dos Passos, Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of war* (1935), Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to arms* (1929). Two very unusual works must

also be mentioned—T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* first issued to a few subscribers in 1926, and *In Parenthesis* (1937) by the artist, David Jones. The sense of betrayal, tempered it is true by a deep humanity, pervades most of this writing. The descriptions of combat are usually thorough.

Turning to the literature of the Second War—our war—we may be forgiven if we suggest that the pervading impression is one of Adventure and Excitement. The innumerable books of escapes, of personal exploits, of unusual undertakings, the stories behind the battles are probably excellent entertainment. This is not to deny the value or dignity of the personal heroism and the contribution to a victory which even a cold war cannot eclipse. There are, of course, exceptions where the sense of adventure is coloured by the feelings and personality of the writer to the extent that the nature of men at war becomes apparent. Such books are F. Spencer Chapman's *The Jungle is neutral* (1949), V. Peniakoff's *Private army* (1950) and a singular piece of war reporting from the Irishman, Denis Johnston, *Nine rivers from Jordan* (1953). But the majority lack the final human judgments, the summing up. It is not surprising that the feeling of "never again," of "no more war" is rare in such books, for any nascent feeling of betrayal is easily submerged by the demands of a society asserting steadfastly in its press, from its pulpits and on its radio that in modern war nobody is the victor, whilst preparing in grim actuality for the chance that this may not be true after all. This dual, compassionless social attitude may, indeed, account for the lack of books of thought and feeling on our war.

But it is the novel, we believe, which displays the greatest vigour in attempting to portray the many-sided nature of the war. Without doubt the most vigorous and the best-selling war novel in this country is Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea* (1951). The story of the war of the little ships is told with a realism in which no point is left undocumented or unexplained. It is all there and the reader need use his imagination but rarely. It is realism bordering on naturalism. Though the book is relatively free from the ward room atmosphere of much writing about the Royal Navy, it manages to exhibit a number of other prejudices—mainly snide asides about other Navies, other services and dockyard workers. If it is strong in incident, in characterisation it is not the equal of Herman Wouk's *The "Caine" Mutiny* (1951) which has as its main theme an apparent obsession with American war novelists—the problems, personal conflicts, and usually the corruption of the Commanding Officer, be he General or Lieutenant. Indeed, an emphasis on rank and command is to be seen in the terms "to pull one's rank" and "I out-rank you . . ." which appear in so many American war novels. It is so rare in our own war novels that we may be forgiven our bewilderment. The tough commander who has to be brutal to his men if he is to do his job, that is killing the maximum number of enemy, is a figure we know well from American films. We meet him occasionally in the novel, as in *Battle Cry* (1953) by Leon Uris, but two of America's most controversial war books deal with the weak and corrupt commander and his effect on the lives of the soldiers he commands. These are, of course, Norman Mailer's *The naked and the dead* (1948) and *From here to eternity* (1951) by James Jones. Much was made at the time of the English publication of Mailer's book of its alleged obscenity. Justified or not, such criticisms have certainly had the effect of obscuring Mailer's attack on the American military caste which is as bitter as any that arose from the First War. *From here to eternity* is an Army rather than a war novel. It strikes us as being more interesting by virtue of its mere existence than for anything

it says. That it sold in hundreds of thousands and was filmed seems to show that it told the American public something it was not unwilling to hear. Violence, drunkenness, sex, weak officers, a good warrant officer and sadistic corporals—all are submerged and only the Army remains. It is a concept of loyalty and duty owing little to the Kipling from whom the title is drawn.

The descriptions of land fighting—the war of the infantry of whom Alun Lewis wrote—

“By day these men ask nothing and obey;
They eat their bread behind a heap of stones;
Hardship and violence grow an easy way,
Winter is like a girl within their bones.”

—these are rare. One English writer, at least, has captured the spirit of the war of rifle, Bren and hand-grenade—Alexander Baron. His *From the city, from the plough* (1948) has all the tautness of action and the communal boredom of the foot-slogger. It showed a promise which his later novels have not fulfilled, as the reviewers say.

We have mentioned several types of war literature and given as many examples as we can. It is not an orderly selection, we agree. We suppose that in the manner of all essays we should now sum up. But it is apparent, surely, that for us as librarians and readers, there can be neither summing-up, nor yet an interim judgment. Books of the types we have mentioned will continue to appear as long as publishers find them lucrative, and we shall no doubt continue to buy and read them. We shall also continue to hope that a literature worthy of the war we have known will assert itself and remain. In the meantime, we can ensure that the outstanding war literature of the past has a chance of survival by putting it and keeping it on our shelves.

Is the *Red badge of courage* in your library? It wasn't in ours.

THE JUNIOR BORROWER

JENNIFER SOLOMON,

Tonbridge Branch, Kent Co. L.

I HAD THOUGHT of calling these notes “I was a Junior Borrower,” but then I decided on the less explicit title so that I should not be confused with Churchill's bodyguard, Stalin's prisoner or a surgeon to the Chinese Reds. However, it is true that I am that comparative rarity, the library assistant who used a public library as a child.

I wonder why there are not more of us? Perhaps when junior borrowers reach the age of sixteen they adopt a decadent attitude—*La chair est triste parce que j'ai lu tous les livres*—and go off to explore the world for themselves. Anyhow, the place which they are qualified to fill at the library counter is taken by those who, for various reasons, have not had the benefit of a public library service in their youth. They have had to try to satisfy their literary appetites with the collection on the bookshelf in the sitting-room, bibliographical relics in the box-room, borrowings from friends and gifts received at the two major feasts of the child's year—Christmas and birthday. I suppose these latter are fired with zeal, determined that other readers will not have to suffer the pangs of book-hunger which they had to endure, so they surely make up in fervour what they may lack in experience, and for the sake of the profession, this is all to the good; for experience can be acquired in time, but enthusiasm—never.

I can well recall some of the feelings I had as a member of the Children's Library: I was a regular borrower from the age of seven until, at nine, I was whisked away to boarding school. After that age I borrowed only during the holidays, which seemed to me all too short for all the reading I wanted to do.

I never read anything but fiction; if I did borrow a non-fiction book it was a mistake—as when I took a book which started as a story about two ordinary children; I was just getting to like them when a geni with a magic carpet appeared and carried them off—for a geography lesson! I was hurt and annoyed and took the book back at once (query: does that count as an issue?). Somehow I felt that the book had lured me in under false pretences, jamming the pill and insulting my intelligence with magic carpets was more than I could bear.

I did not always disapprove of magic, but it had to be what I can only call "possible magic" for me to stomach it—no airy-fairy-fly-by-night for me. Peter Pan was possible, but Tinker Bell made me swallow hard and blush for the author. Mrs. Molesworth's "Cuckoo Clock" was possible, too, because I had never seen a cuckoo clock and could well believe that a bird living in a clock would have some unusual qualities.

I have a memory of the first book I ever borrowed, it was called "The Blue Rabbit," and had just the right mixture of fact and fantasy for me. It was about a little boy who had a pet rabbit of great character: this animal could talk if there was anyone worth talking to (so could most animals, I imagine), he also had powers to carry his friend off to wherever he wanted to go. These journeys were strictly non-instructive (a missed picnic or a visit to his parents who were out in India) and could only be made at twelve o'clock mid-day or midnight. The intending traveller had to hold the rabbit's ears and wish hard to be at the place to which he wanted to go. The boy could travel in time as well as space, which was an added attraction to me, and seemed quite within the realm of possibility. In the course of the book the information was imparted that any animals with long ears had these powers; rabbits, donkeys and even cats to a small extent; I believe the author added that the animals hardly ever used their ability nowadays, and in my experience this has proved sadly true.

What else did I read? Well, I was a very ordinary little girl, I read for recreation. Some of us seem to forget that schoolchildren are attending a full-time course of study in a wide variety of subjects, some of which puzzle them, some bore them to sobs and most of which seem utterly unrelated to real life; we forget that when we study we choose our subject and it is only parts of it that we dislike, not the whole proposition.

If children work with moderate application at school, they feel ready for something which they can read with ease and interest when lessons and homework are done. I read "Katy" and "Little Women" and "Heidi," and I read Noel Streatfeild's books again and again.

I feel now that in re-reading books I was perhaps wasting reading time; after all, the age for enjoying children's books (as a participant, not an observer) soon passes, and there are so many good ones that they cannot all be read even once in that brief period. I think that a little advice and assistance from a librarian would have helped me to make better use of my time.

Now I must say something which will be rather depressing for children's librarians, I am afraid. I do not blame the staff at the library which I used for any lack of assistance, for I was terrified of them; I should not have dreamt of asking for help and I should have burst into

tears if any had been offered, thinking it in the nature of a correction. I may have been an oddity in this respect, but I think I belonged to a type of young reader whose characteristic is a dread of grown-ups in general and of "library ladies" in particular; let us hope that this type of child is now extinct.

ROGER HARGRAVE, *Hampshire Co. L.*

LITERATURE, GRADUATES AND THE LIBRARY PROFESSION

MR. CHURLEY'S article, *Education and the Librarian*, shows the usual inclination of those who have, or think they have, a good knowledge of Literature, as opposed to literature, to regard such a knowledge as the chief or even the only mark of both intelligence and culture. "A student may do brilliantly in a library school and yet be unable to sustain a conversation on a literary topic with an average, intelligent reader."

Two questions should be asked concerning this statement: (a) is it true? (b) does it matter if it is true? The answer to the first depends largely on the use of the word "intelligent". Unless one accepts the writer's implicit definition of intelligence as an appreciation and knowledge of Literature, it would appear, from my admittedly very limited experience, that the statement is incorrect. Using the definition explicitly stated in the article, i.e. that intelligence is the possession of an inquiring, interested mind, I would assert that an intelligent reader is only in a relatively few cases so knowledgeable in literary matters as is implied in the quoted passage. Rather, he is interested in many subjects, of which Literature is at most but one. Therefore, no very deep knowledge of the subject will be needed to discuss a literary topic with such a reader.

The same argument answers the second question. Literature constitutes only a fraction, usually a small fraction, of the interests of the "average intelligent reader." Surely a reader has the right to expect intelligent conversation on other subjects? Furthermore, might it not be the case, that the concentration of former generations of librarians on Literature, at the expense of other subjects, is responsible for the low prestige of the profession, of which Mr. Churley so rightly complains? A doctor who could cure but one disease would not be highly regarded; the existence of specialists does not remove the need for general practitioners. I suggest it would not be stretching this analogy to say that the graduate librarian is the equivalent of the specialist, the non-graduate of the G.P.

In a society which tends to judge everything by utilitarian, materialistic standards, professions too must expect to be so judged. If the public do not want Literature, let us not force it upon them, but rather supply what they do want. The technical and recreational books which we should (and by and large, do) supply, need intelligence to a degree equal to or greater than that required by Literature for their use and appreciation. For is it not aesthetic sense, rather than intelligence, which is required to appraise the work of Milton and Shakespeare, no less than that of Rembrandt and Van Dyck? Intelligence is necessary to learn to read—but what is read is largely a matter of taste. For this reason I suggest that, provided he has a knowledge of other subjects, it does *not* matter if a librarian is unable to discuss literary matters. Other subjects, on which it is equally necessary for a librarian to be able to converse, are often considered, from a materialistic viewpoint, to be more important than Literature: whether this is true or not, it can be asserted that

they have suffered neglect, as a result of the unanimous idolatry of the latter by librarians, for a long enough time already.

Leaving this point, we find the statement, "If a librarian has no more than a surface knowledge (if that) of a subject, he will not get very far in aiding readers or researchers who look to him for help or advice." This may be true of special libraries and special departments of large libraries, where the standard to which a subject is studied is very high. But with reference to public libraries it appears palpably false. If a librarian knows his job, which involves among other things the ability to exploit books, he can be of very great assistance, even in subjects of which his knowledge is slight. The librarian cannot hope to be on equal terms with all his readers in their own subjects. If they turn to him for advice, it is as a librarian, and not as a subject specialist that he is expected to advise—if he has a good knowledge, so much the better, but it is not a *sine qua non*, except, as I have implied above, in certain difficult research queries, which would be far better dealt with in a special library in any case. The reader can usually explain what he wants, if he is tactfully asked to do so. The dishonest practice, sometimes recommended to reference assistants, of pretending to a knowledge of a subject of which one is in fact completely ignorant must be the cause of much of the alleged difficulty of finding out what a reader's query really is. It is obvious he will not explain a subject with which he thinks you are already familiar.

From my remarks above, it follows, as Mr. Churley himself admits, that the *actual knowledge* gained in working for a degree is but rarely relevant in this profession. It is in what may be called the "by-products" of university study that we must seek the additional qualification of the graduate. Mr. Churley quotes an N.J.C. report concerning the nature of these by-products; but the L.A. syllabus is designed to produce approximately the qualities listed there. If it does not, then it should be amended so that it does. This must be conceded, but the question should be asked, "What will be the effect of adding an academic examination from which graduates are to be exempt, as is suggested by the article?" Mr. Churley has given the answers which will appeal to the profession at large, but he has remained strangely quiet on the effect on the position of graduates in the competition for posts. It is quite clear that such a proposal, if adopted, would make it more difficult to become a non-graduate fellow, while leaving the position much the same for graduate entrants; nevertheless, the graduate will still expect the same consideration to be given to his degree as at present. Why should the graduate expect to annexe a professional qualification to his degree with less effort than is required to obtain it on its own? In other words, to get two qualifications at the price of one-and-a-half? If he proves his worth as a librarian his degree will weight the scales heavily in his favour when competing with a non-graduate. If he has little or no worth as a librarian, the sooner he leaves the profession, the better for all concerned, not least himself. One of the "challenges" vaguely mentioned in the article would appear to be the reorganisation of the profession for the benefit of graduates. This impression is strongly reinforced by the writer's deprecation of London University external degrees, the most practical means by which a non-graduate librarian can put himself on a more nearly equal academic footing with the graduate.

It is not my contention that a degree is worthless in librarianship—it is rather that the view held by some graduates, that a degree is the fundamental qualification in librarianship, is false; professional qualifications are fundamental; a degree is a highly desirable extra.

NATIONAL SERVICE AND ARMY LIBRARIES: A SYMPOSIUM

*H. J. EDWARDS, *Assistant, Finsbury P.L.*, and A. M. MORLEY, *Assistant, Kent Co. L.*, write:

Following the article by Mr. Bell and Mr. Whittaker in the April *Assistant Librarian* on the problems of National Service, it was thought that readers who still have their National Service before them might be interested in a brief account of military service in general and Army Libraries in particular.

As has been pointed out, library assistants on registering for national service may opt to serve in Army Libraries, but it must be stressed that there is no guarantee that they will be accepted for this type of duty, the intake obviously being dependent on the numbers required and on the qualifications of the other applicants. Naturally the Royal Army Educational Corps will prefer to draw upon deferred university graduates and newly-trained teachers for its potential instructors, rather than on the assistant with only General Schools; for after all, only a comparatively small number of librarians are needed. However, we have no desire to be pessimistic, and the fact remains that quite a high proportion of those who opt for Army Libraries *are* accepted, and it is with these that we wish to deal.

Throughout your Army career it is stressed that you are a soldier first and a teacher (or librarian) afterwards, and it is doubtless with this in mind that the War Office sends its potential instructors to basic training centres where they receive a thorough military grounding. Here, although the R.A.E.C. personnel wear the flashes and badges of that Corps, they are treated in exactly the same way as the trainees of the regiment to which they are attached—usually a distinguished infantry regiment. This basic training course normally lasts from ten to twelve weeks and is entirely military in character, consisting of foot-drill, P.T., route marches and small-arms training.

Having passed out of basic training, the librarian-to-be is sent with the rest of his intake to the Army School of Education, where he finds similar intakes from other basic training units. The School of Education is at present situated at Beaconsfield in Buckinghamshire amid delightful surroundings, and here over a twelve weeks' course the potential instructor learns how to teach. Even the trained teacher has much to learn, for teaching adults is considerably different to teaching children.

But what of the librarian? He may be given some experience in the school's library and possibly a short course on the technicalities of Army Librarianship, but apart from that he is expected to study teaching methods in common with the rest of his intake. Besides, the staff consists of teachers, not librarians, and rightly or wrongly, the Army expects the librarian to know the fundamentals of his profession before he enters the service. This policy is not quite so stupid as it may at first seem. The Army can never gauge exactly the numbers of librarians it will need, and perhaps only a quarter of the librarians on the course will be needed. There is no reason why the remainder, provided that they pass the course, should not be utilised as Educational Instructors. In point of fact, all the students, whether teachers or librarians, must pass the course, and officially librarians are only recognised as instructors attached to Army Libraries.

Every student who completes the course passes out as a Sergeant-Instructor, and to this end the school concentrates on turning out not only teachers, but also good senior N.C.O.s. To ensure this, drill is not neglected, and training is

*The authors served as Sergeant-Librarians at No. 12, Command Library, H.Q. Eastern Command, from 1950 to 1952.

carried out under the guidance of Warrant Officers of the Brigade of Guards.

At the end of the course candidates come up before the Command Selection Board, who allot the successful candidates to existing vacancies, the selected librarians being sent to Command Libraries and District Libraries throughout the country and abroad.

The Army Library Service is not unlike a large municipal or county library system (apart from accounting), all books being supplied direct to the Command Libraries by the headquarters (the Army Central Book Depot), the Command supplying the districts, sub-districts and units under its jurisdiction.

The actual work in an Army Library does not differ a great deal from that in a smaller municipal library, apart from the problems of postal service and book distribution, which again are more closely allied to County Library work. Books have to be catalogued, classified and processed and the public served. The Forces public differs little from its civilian counterpart, except that perhaps more emphasis is given to the provision of light fiction in an attempt to attract as many readers as possible. But the student and the serious reader are not neglected, and officers preparing for Staff College examinations and all studying for post-release jobs and examinations need special and expert attention.

The Command Librarian himself is usually an officer or senior Warrant Officer seconded from teaching, though to-day more use is being made of civil servants in Army Libraries.* Unfortunately this means that there is rarely a chartered librarian in charge and the assistant therefore is not able to claim the time spent in Army Libraries as experience towards the three years' full time service needed for the L.A. Registration Examination. However, while the service to the public must suffer in consequence, this lack of qualified supervision has the advantage that the young assistant is thrown upon his own resources and learns independence and initiative that are very useful to him in civil library work, especially as he moves up the scale.

Perhaps we have been lucky with our experience of military service, but our view is that the two years' National Service, especially if spent in Army Libraries, are of great value both from the point of view of training and of broadening the outlook. Military librarianship is not a sinecure, it is often hard and exacting work, especially for the assistant with only a year's professional experience behind him, but if treated seriously it can be most rewarding.

D. E. DAVINSON, *Student, Newcastle School of Librarianship*, writes:

One of the direct results of the war was the institution of the various Schools of Librarianship whose purpose it was to assist the returning serviceman to bridge the enormous gap created by 3, 4 or even 5 years' war service. The majority of these men, through no fault of their own, had been more or less completely divorced from the practice of librarianship, and quite obviously the problem of their rehabilitation was of great importance both to themselves and to the profession as a whole.

The position of the National serviceman to-day is in many ways somewhat similar. In the Army especially the prospects of remaining in England for the whole of one's service are daily becoming more remote. The consequence is that, once again through no fault of his own, the serviceman loses contact with the profession. It is true of course that on his return there are the Schools of Librarianship, now well in their stride, but the point is that the whole tone of

["Since the end of the war, five majors of the Royal Army Educational Corps have served as librarians in Army libraries. Now after a battle, they are being replaced by civil servants. The majors are returning to military duties.*

"How does this benefit the taxpayer? Pay and allowances for a major total about £1,000 a year. Maximum pay for civilian librarians is £700." Recent news item in the *Evening Standard*.—Hon. Ed.]

service life has changed compared with the grim realities of war-time.

After completing basic training, the recruit, with few exceptions, finds that he has some time on his hands which he could put to good use (always discounting solo, pontoon, and the local hostelry) given the means and perhaps a little encouragement.

It is surely a matter of great importance that some means of keeping in touch with the profession is offered to the National serviceman if he is to return to the profession on completing his service. I myself met two other librarians during National Service, both of whom had doubts about returning to the profession; in fact, neither did, if there had been some machinery in operation for their welfare, the story might conceivably have been different.

The facilities at present offered by the Library Association to National servicemen are neither more nor less than those offered to the profession at large, except that a reduced rate of subscription is payable. It should be pointed out however that a person in his first year of training receives only 28s. weekly, after stoppages about 17s. 6d., and even to pay a guinea is a real hardship.

It is possible for him to take a correspondence course, however, though here again, £2 7s. 6d. represents an almost insuperable barrier, and whilst it is true that he could perhaps attempt one, it must be remembered that to do such a course well, an adequate supply of textbooks is essential, and probably difficult to obtain.

In the matter of correspondence courses there are possibilities worth exploring. For instance, it might be possible to arrange a course through the Services Educational schemes at very nominal personal cost and at the same time make arrangement for certain facilities for study to be granted, such as additional time off or a special room in which to work. These things are, I believe, possible if one knows the right strings to pull. In my own case, and I am surely not alone,

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the right ones only became evident when I had almost completed my service.

It seems then that if National service is not to be a complete waste of time, professionally speaking, the problems arising out of National service must be seriously considered by the L.A. Council, or at least by the Education Committee.

Points which might be discussed include the following:—

1. Exemption from payment of subscriptions, at least for the first year of service, minimum pay in the second year of service being 38s. instead of 28s. weekly.

2. Some means, other than the impersonal "Record and Assistant", of keeping the serviceman informed on current happenings and general trends. A duplicated news-sheet perhaps.

3. Consultation at the highest possible level with the services Education authorities with regard to the provision of facilities for study, including the possibility of providing a modified correspondence course.

4. Adequate publicity of measures taken, or already in operation, to assist the serviceman or those on the verge of their service.

With the prevailing difficulties of recruitment it is surely of the greatest importance that those persons already recruited are not allowed to break away unheeded, as they can quite easily do, during National Service.

GNR. A. R. ANDREWS, *Park Hall Camp, Oswestry, Salop*, writes:

Although I opted for the Educational Corps, I was not accepted, and it is in fact now well nigh impossible for a National Serviceman to join R.A.E.C. It is certainly most unlikely to any library assistant unless he has a degree.

There seem to be a very few jobs in Unit libraries, run by the Unit and staffed by them—not by R.A.E.C.—but these are very few and far between. In practice I think it is true to say that the chances of any library assistant pursuing his profession during his two years' National Service are exceedingly remote.

With regard to examinations, it is unlikely that the first six months will provide much opportunity for study, although after that conditions may allow study if proper facilities are available. I suggest that a further way of keeping in touch with library work is for the National Serviceman to use his spare time to visit libraries in his area and possibly talking to the librarians.

In conclusion, may I say that I heartily endorse the comment of Messrs. Bell and Whittaker regarding the difficulty of ensuring delivery of the *Assistant*; and also the final sentence of their article, which is, I believe, very true.

A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Students are reminded that completed application forms, together with the appropriate fees, for the courses beginning in October and November, must reach Mrs. L. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, on or before 30th September, 1954, after which date no application will be considered. Earlier receipt is advisable and would be greatly appreciated.

Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current *Students' Handbook*.

Revision Courses. A limited number

of *Registration* and *Final* courses are available to run from September to December. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

Applications will be accepted up to one week after publication of the examination results, when this is later than 30th September.

Fees. The fee per course is £2 7s. 6d., plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia.

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